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CLAIMS:

1.   A method of copying a media file to a device over a network, to enable a copy of the media file to be played, whereby surplus bandwidth that is not required for playing the media file is used to enhance the copy of the media file on the device.

2.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the surplus bandwidth is made available as a result of (i) playing the media file at a reduced rate or quality (ii) or re-playing parts of the media file or (iii) pausing playback of the media file.

3.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the enhancement is performed according to a profile that is stored in a server.

4.   The method of Claims 1 wherein the enhancement is performed according to a profile that is transmitted to a server by the device before or during copying.

5.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the enhancement is performed according to a profile that is a combination of values stored in a server and values transmitted to the server by the device before or during copying.

6.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the data required for playback is selected according to a profile that is stored in a server.

7.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the data required for playback is selected according to a profile that is transmitted to a server by the device before or during copying.

8.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the data required for playback is selected according to a profile that is a combination of values stored in the server and values transmitted to the server by the device before or during copying.

9.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the copy of the media file on the client acts as a temporary cache and all or part of the media file is deleted during or at the end of playback.

10.   The method of Claim 1 in which the media file encodes video and the image data corresponding to each video frame or sequence of frames is generated using a

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wavelet transform and modified with SPIHT compression, and the resultant bitstream includes several discrete bitstream layers, each bitstream layer enabling image data at a different spatial resolution to be displayed on a display.

11. The method of Claim 1 further used to provide the device with data for purposes other than playback, including (i) analysis of the media data (ii) re-compression of the media data into a new format (iii) transfer of the media data to another medium such as paper, film, magnetic tape, disc, CD-ROM or other digital storage medium.

12. The method of Claim 1 in which the media file encodes audio.

13. The method of Claim 1 in which the media file encodes combined video and audio.

14. The method of Claim 1 in which a local cache is used to store data transmitted using the surplus bandwidth and which is only decoded if required to enhance the copy of the media file on the device.

15. The method of Claim 1 in which a local buffer is used to store data transmitted using the surplus bandwidth and which is only decoded if required to enhance the copy of the media file on the device.

16. The method of Claim 1 in which the surplus capacity is used for one or more of the following enhancements: (i) to load a low quality version of an entire sequence of material to allow subsequent fast play through the material; (ii) to load certain key frames for the sequence for scrubbing through the material; or (iii) to improve the quality of the frames surrounding a current playback position.

17. The method of Claim 1 in which the device is a client in a client server network.

18. The method of Claim 1 in which the device is a server or edge server.

19. A media file which is copied to a device over a network to enable a copy of the media file to be played, whereby surplus bandwidth that is not required for playing the media file is used to enhance the copy of the media file on the device.

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20.   A computer program which enables a client to enhance or supplement the copy of a media file copied to it from a server over a network, by using surplus bandwidth that is not required for playing the media file on the client.

21.   A client programmed with the computer program of Claim 20.

5   22.   A computer program which enables a server to enhance the copy of a media file copied from it to a client over a network, by using surplus bandwidth that is not required for playing the media file on the client.

23.   A server programmed with the computer program of Claim 22.